her children. In practice a wife of vigorous character has often been dominant. By bearing a son a woman acquires greater importance and as, in the normal course of events, she becomes a mother-in-law and a grandmother, she is regarded as being of more and more consequence and is treated with increasing respect. After death she shares with her husband the honors paid by her sons. A woman without a son, however, is a reproach among her neighbors and to her husband, and often without honor or provision for support in her old age. In ordinary homes, especially of most of the farmers and of the poor, girls and women have led a life of hard labor. In such households—the vast majority in China—from their earliest possible years children, both boys and girls, have been trained to work, at such tasks as watching the cattle and gathering fuel. To her duties of bearing and rearing children and caring for the home the wife has often added those of helping in the heavy labor in the fields. The wives of the well-to-do have led a somewhat easier and even luxurious existence—but have not therefore necessarily been happier. Their seclusion and idleness have encouraged them to seek solace in gambling, opium smoking, and other vices.

A custom of the old China, now fortunately passing, was binding the feet of women. The practice was almost universal—although the Hakkas, the Manchus, non-Chinese tribes, the boat population in the South, and some of the very poor did not conform with it. Its origin seems very uncertain, but it is at least several centuries old. The requirement was in no sense religious but purely a matter of social convention. A woman without small feet was regarded as disgraced and it was impossible to get a de-

sirable husband for her. The process of binding the feet was very painful, involving as it did the compression of those members by tight bandages into as small a compass as possible. Infection and gangrene might set in and the girl might even lose her life.

When the binding had once been completed the pain largely ceased, but walking was difficult, especially for those with very small feet, and the general effect upon the health deleterious.

At least one of the Ch'ing Emperors tried to stop the practice, but without avail. It was not until the disintegration of old customs wrought by the coming of the West that the practice began to fall into abevance.